Appl. No. 09/332,212   **Pag 8 of 8**
Amendment and/or Response
Reply to final Office action of 21 October 2003

REMARKS / DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

Claims 1-10 and 12-18 are pending in the application.

Examiner Smith states in the final Office action that claims 1, 4-7, 9-10, and 12-18 are allowable over the prior art of record, and that claims 2, 3, and 8 would be allowable if amended to conform with 35 USC § 112, second paragraph. Applicant thanks Examiner Smith for this indication of patentable subject matter.

The final Office action rejects claims 2, 3, and 8 under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, but states that they are otherwise allowable. Claims 2, 3, and 8 are amended for clarity as requested by the Examiner, but without changing their scope or meaning in any way. The claims may also have been amended for non-statutory reasons without narrowing them, to correct informalities, correct misspelling(s), remove figure label number(s), and/or to replace European claim phraseology with U.S. claim language having the same meaning. No new matter is added.

A draft of the amended claims was discussed during a telephonic interview between the Examiner and the undersigned on 21 January 2004 and it is agreed that this amendment should put the application in condition for allowance. Of course, applicant understands that the Examiner may perform an additional search and may issue a non-final Office action if additional reference(s) deemed relevant are found.

In view of the foregoing, applicant(s) respectfully request(s) that the Examiner withdraw the rejections of record, allow all the pending claims, and find the application to be in condition for allowance. If any points remain in issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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